

## A CATALOGUE OF ATROCITIES

*As many as 100,000 Mozambican civilians may have been murdered by South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance Movement (Renamo) rebels over the last two years, according to a detailed U.S. State Department document published in April. The survey, representing the first systematic attempt to substantiate widespread allegations of Renamo atrocities, is based on interviews with nearly 200 refugees in Mozambique and neighboring countries conducted by Robert Gersony, an independent consultant for the department's Bureau for Refugee Programs. Below we reproduce extracts of the report:*

### Quantification of Renamo Conduct

The great majority of the total of 196 interviewed refugees whose migration was caused by conflict violence cited Renamo actions as the reason for their flight. Roughly 40 percent reported personally witnessing the murder of civilians principally by Renamo combatants and Renamo police in the absence of resistance or defense. The 169 refugees who arrived at their current locations in 1987-1988 reported roughly 600 such murders. The refugees provided eyewitness or other credible accounts about these killings which included shooting executions, knife/axe/bayonet killings, burning alive, beating to death, forced asphyxiation, forced starvation, forced drownings, and random shooting at civilians in villages during attacks.

The results in the other abuse categories were similar. Nearly 40 percent of the refugees had direct knowledge of the imposition by Renamo of forced portering on the civilian population; about 20 percent had themselves served as porters. Over 70 percent of those who had served as porters witnessed severe beatings of porters who could not keep up, who stumbled, or who dropped their loads. About 60 percent of those who served as porters reported that they

eyewitnessed or had credible reports of captive porters who were beaten to death or executed along the route for the same reasons.

Over 15 percent of the refugees reported patterns of systematic rape of civilian women by Renamo combatants. One rape complaint against government soldiers was reported. About one-third of those reporting house burnings saw their own houses burned. No complaints of house burning were reported against government soldiers.

Nearly 40 percent of the refugees complained about abduction of civilians, a pattern most typical of the nominal "destruction areas." Of these, over a quarter had themselves been victims of abduction. 94 percent of these identified Renamo combatants as the abductors; the remainder were split between government soldiers and unknown parties.

Looting and forced contribution of resources was reported by nearly 60 percent of the refugees. Of these, some 45 percent reported that beatings were used when necessary to extract resources. 93 percent of the looters were identified as Renamo combatants, 6 percent as government soldiers, 1 percent as unknown parties. Mutilations, reported by 5 percent of the refugees, were all attributed to Renamo combatants.

For the 1987-1988 arrivals, discounting non-conflict migrants, 91 percent of the refugees' reports were categorized by the author as "very negative" toward Renamo; 5 percent as "negative"; 1 percent as "positive." Three percent offered no report and no complaints.

### Summary of Findings

From 48 districts in northern, central, and southern Mozambique, in 25 refugee camps in five countries separated by as many as 1,500 miles, nearly 200 Mozambican refugee accounts of their experiences are strikingly similar. If that sample is reasonably representative, their accounts, corroborated in large measure by independent experience of some reli-

gious and relief assistance workers, compel certain unavoidable findings.

First, the level of violence reported to be conducted by Renamo against the civilian population of rural Mozambique is extraordinarily high. Roughly 170 refugees, each representing one family, who arrived in 1987/88, collectively reported about 600 murders by Renamo of unarmed civilians, in the absence of resistance or defense. If the refugee reports are generally accurate and the sample reasonably representative, it is conservatively estimated that 100,000 civilians may have been murdered by Renamo in this manner.

The same 170 refugees report many hundreds of cases of systematic forced portering, beatings, rape, looting, burning of villages, abductions, and mutilations. These patterns of systematic abuse represent many hundreds, if not thousands, of individual instances reported by this small sample. Conservative projections based on this data would yield extremely high levels of abuse.

That the accounts are so strikingly similar by refugees who have fled from northern, central, and southern Mozambique suggests that the violence is systematic and coordinated and not a series of spontaneous, isolated incidents by undisciplined combatants.

Second, the relationship between Renamo and the civilian population, according to the refugee accounts, revolves almost exclusively around a harsh extraction of labor and food. If these reports are accurate, it appears that the only reciprocity provided by Renamo for the efforts of the civilians is the possibility of remaining alive. There are virtually no reports of attempts to win the loyalty—or even the neutrality—of the villagers. The refugees report virtually no effort by Renamo to explain to the civilians the purpose of the insurgency, its proposed program, or its aspirations. If there is a significant sector of the population which is sympathetic to this organization, it was not reflected in the refugee accounts. □